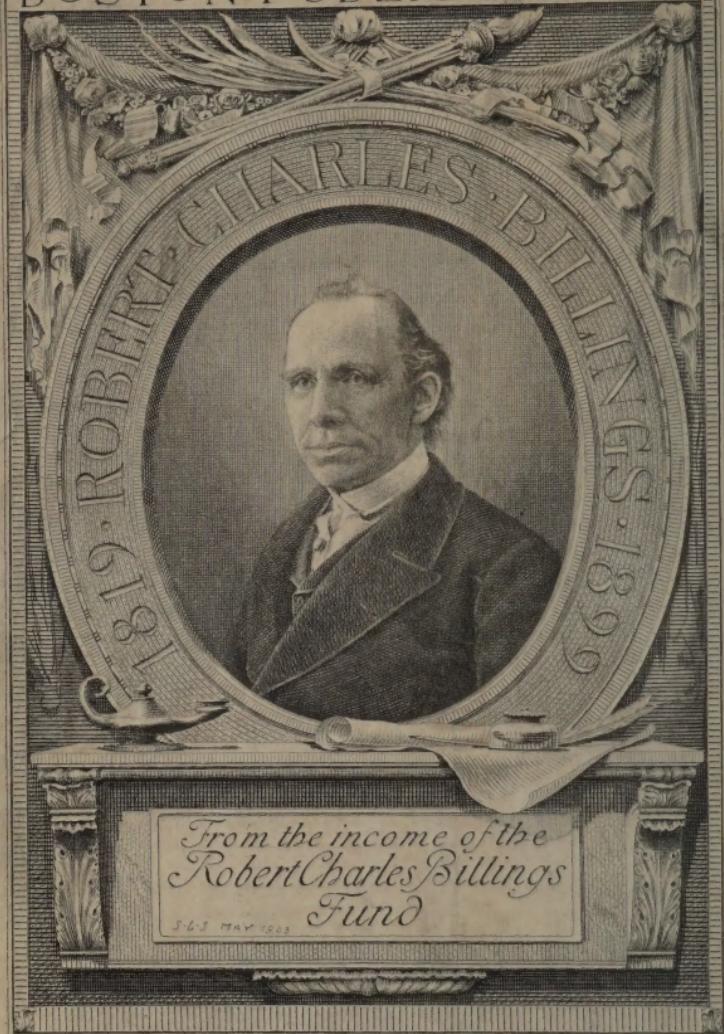




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ADDRESS

ON THE

RELATION

OF THE

General Government to Slavery.)

DELIVERED BEFORE A PUBLIC MEETING IN CAMDEN, N. J.

BY

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ISAAC S. (MULFORD,) M.D.

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THE
RELATION
OF THE
GENERAL GOVERNMENT TO SLAVERY.

IT is in times of difficulty and danger that the mariner applies himself with especial attention and care to an observation of his compass and his charts. He endeavors to make himself certain in regard to his true position, and whither he is tending; to determine the nature and extent of the danger with which he may be threatened, and in what manner it may best be averted.

Not less is the watchfulness that is required on the part of those who may have a concern in the management and direction of public affairs. The ship of state, like the vessel upon the ocean, may be overtaken by storm, and driven from its course, or, through negligence or incompetence, may be suffered to drift upon a dangerous shore. An example somewhat of this kind is furnished in the state of public affairs in our own country at the present time. The government has deviated from its ancient track, and is rapidly tending towards a situation in which it will be exposed to injury and peril. And anxious observers have charged, that he to whom the helm has been given, has not shown himself to be equal to the trust. It has been charged, that neither the wisdom nor the strength which his position requires has been exhibited in his course. In consequence, a deep fear has come upon men, lest the noble ship, floating upon dangerous waters, and without proper guidance, may be finally lost, and lost with all its precious freight of human liberty and human hopes. But there is left to us one means of recovery and of safety. It is the privilege of our condition, that each and every one, that the whole body of the people, may think and judge and act, and thus exert a controlling influence in matters pertaining to the general welfare. Nay, more than

this; not only is such the *privilege* of our condition, but it is also one of the *duties* belonging to it. And it is in the exercise of this privilege, in the discharge of this duty, that multitudes are now gathering in earnest consultation, to decide upon the action which the time requires. And it is with this privilege, under the moving influence of this obligation, that we have assembled at the present time. And we come, not in the spirit of partizanship; under no impulse of mere sectional feeling; to make no hostile demonstration; but we seek to come with the soberness and candor which become the occasion, for the purpose of considering a great national question,—a question that must affect the well-being of the people of this land, not only for the present time, but also in all time to come. And with a view to bring this question before us in all its varied aspects, the following positions are taken: *First*, That our national institutions were erected as free institutions, for the purpose of giving and securing liberty to every individual within their reach. *Second*, That a policy has grown up in our government entirely inconsistent with its original design; that power is now wielded in opposition to liberty, and for the promotion and extension of the interests of slavery. In support of the first of these positions, the early history of our country, and of the first movements in our national career, are appealed to. It is there seen that a regard to civil, political, and religious liberty, was the great motive that led to the first establishment of a people, and of government upon our shores; that our forefathers, fleeing from the despotisms of the ancient world, came to the country imbued with this feeling; and that, under its influence, all those movements and struggles were made which resulted in placing us in our present condition amongst the nations of the earth. And it is also seen that, in the very first declaration which we as a people set forth to the world, the noble sentiment was proclaimed, that “all men are born free and equal, and are entitled to certain inalienable privileges, amongst which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” A declaration this, well worthy of the men, of the occasion, and of the great cause then in issue. And at the next step, when the struggle for liberty had but just been concluded, action was taken in the fullest accordance with the principle already proclaimed. The provisional government which the exigencies of the time had raised, in legislating for the ter-

ritory that had been placed within its charge, enacted the following ordinance : "That there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." This was in 1787, and this was the first of our national laws bearing directly upon the question of slavery. To this ordinance, every one of the States then present gave their assent, (the voting being then by States) the South sustaining it as well, and as fully, as the North. Originally, this provision had been offered by Jefferson ; and the whole proceedings upon it show in the strongest light the sentiment of that time, in reference to slavery. They show that however it might be adhered to, from supposed necessity, as a local thing, that yet there was no desire for its extension ; on the contrary, that the desire of the country was, to prevent its extension. And the importance of the action just taken was such as fully to warrant the language afterwards used in relation to it by one of the greatest men of our country. "I doubt," he says, "whether one single law, of either ancient or modern time, has produced effects of more distinct, marked, and lasting character, than the ordinance of 1787. It impressed upon the soil itself, whilst yet a wilderness, an incapacity to bear any other than freemen." Following very soon upon the proceedings just noticed, were the movements for the formation and adoption of the new Constitution ; and the character and spirit of that instrument, in reference to the subject in question, it is important to examine. This Constitution, it is said, was ordained and established by the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and to their posterity. And these several objects were provided for in the plan, so far as was practicable. The framers could not but have been desirous that it should be of a character to give the fullest expression to the ideas and principles which were existing and prevailing at the time. Many of them were the same men who had put every thing at hazard in defence of the liberties of the country ; who had put life, and fortune, and sacred honor in pledge, and they could not have been willing in their new work, to go counter to all that had been done and suffered in former time. But difficulties were met with in this new

work which neither the highest wisdom, nor the sincerest devotion to principle could then entirely remove—difficulties which had become interwoven, as it were, into the very web of social and domestic life. Amongst the chief of these embarrassments was one which had resulted from the policy that the mother country had pursued, for her own advantage, in governing her colonies. She had permitted and encouraged a traffic for the importation of slaves—a traffic that was regarded with so little favor in the colonies themselves that it had been proposed to include this in the enumeration of injuries which had impelled the American people to a separation from the Parent State. Yet, whatever sensibility there might have been to the injury and evil involved in this traffic, it had yet been continued, and at the period when the Constitution was formed, slaves were found in most of the original States. This fact was felt to be disgraceful to the people of the country, as a sort of practical denial of the principles and cause which they had professed, and had struggled to maintain; and the history of that period abundantly shows, that the men who were then the actors in public affairs, were entirely opposed to the continuance of slavery; and, had it been possible, provision had been made for its final extinction. But, as existing within the limits of the several States, it was regarded as a local thing; and there it was permitted to remain to be treated with by the States themselves. But if thus left without direct control, there still was no other favor shown to it than such as was deemed to be necessary to secure the amity of States, by directing that fugitives should be restored when escaping from one State to another. And, on the other hand, it is to be noted, that, whatsoever was the extent of concession to local authority, (an extent, however, which will be seen as we advance,) that still, in all that came properly within their range, the constitutional provisions were entirely in favor of freedom and in opposition to bondage. Care was taken that even in its language, the national charter should harmonize fully with its purpose; the words slave and slavery, were carefully excluded from its pages; wherever slaves were referred to, the word *person* was constantly employed. And in such of its provisions as have an immediate bearing upon the subject, the spirit of the instrument is sufficiently exhibited. In dealing with the external relations of the country, no such difficulty existed as there was in regard

to matters pertaining to the internal condition of States ; and hence, in this outward direction, the question of slavery might be directly met. Accordingly, a period was designated when Congress should be empowered entirely to prohibit the importation of slaves. In this way the national character was to be vindicated, and the flag of the country preserved from pollution. And it is to be noted, that the *prospective* feature of this provision had regard alone to States then existing ; beyond these limits, the power in question might be exercised in advance of the stipulated time, and it was so exercised. This constitutional provision was of the highest significance. By another article, authority was given to Congress to make all needful rules and regulations respecting the public territory. And here, although there was no specific direction as to the measures of Congress in reference to slavery, an ample warrant was yet given for discretionary action, and indeed, when this provision is considered in connection with what had already been done in regard to the government of territories, something more than mere discretionary power might seem to be implied.

Such were the circumstances under which the new government was established and brought into action, and the line of policy then entered upon is to be carefully noticed. And it is seen that, by the very first Congress, a law was enacted adopting and confirming the ordinance which had been formerly passed, prohibiting slavery throughout the territories. This enactment was of the utmost importance, as being declarative of the views of that time, both in regard to the powers of the government, and also as to its aims. It was a declaration that whilst slavery was permitted to remain in existing States, as a local thing, that yet, beyond these limits, and so soon as it came within the range of the General Government, it should be totally prohibited. In a word, it was a declaration that, whilst slavery was local, freedom should be national. That was the position then taken. It should be remarked in passing, that a portion of territory which had been surrendered to the Union by States in which slavery existed, continued to be entrammelled by a condition imposed by those States, at the time of the surrender. They had made a stipulation that, within this territory, Congress should make no regulation forbidding slavery. Of consequence, the action of Congress was here entirely estopped. But

we have seen, and shall further see, that wheresoever the action of the government could be fairly applied, it was made to subserve the interests of freedom.

The first step taken by Congress has been noted, and the subsequent course was in the same direction. In the year 1800, Congress declared in the organic law of the Territory of Indiana, that there should be established within said territory, a government in all respects similar to that which was provided by the ordinance of 1787. This ordinance, as before mentioned, contained the restriction prohibiting slavery and involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime. Two years afterwards, in 1802, the same thing was done, though upon a somewhat different occasion. A law was then passed to enable the people of Ohio to form a state constitution, and it was then provided, that the said constitution should not be repugnant to the ordinance of 1787. The very same provisions were made, and the same action taken by Congress, when organic laws were established in Michigan and Illinois, the former in 1805, and the latter in 1809. In 1816 again, the people of Indiana were empowered, by an act of Congress, to erect a state constitution, but with the proviso already applied in similar cases. In 1818, the same thing was done in regard to Illinois. With one exception, to be hereafter noticed, we have here before us the entire course of the government touching the matter in question, for a period of more than a quarter of a century. The admission of some Slave States into the Union during this period, requires no notice, because these States were formed out of territory, from which, as already stated, the action of the General Government had been precluded; or otherwise, out of old Slave States themselves, where, of course, the same obstruction existed. But the actual working of the government within its admitted sphere (with only the exception already referred to) was entirely uniform during the period just mentioned; and it was a period of the highest importance in the history of the country, not only from its actual duration, but also from the fact that the course of policy was directed in a great measure by the same individuals who had been concerned in framing our national institutions, and who were most perfectly acquainted with their real intent and aim. Let us, then, look once more at the movements of that time. It has been seen, that amongst the powers assigned to Con-

gress, was one for restraining the importation of slaves, and that this power had been exercised in certain cases, at an early period; and besides this, so soon as the period arrived when this provision might be applied so as to operate throughout the States, the power it gave was used to its utmost extent. The introduction of slaves from abroad was prohibited by the severest penalties, and thus the entire country, without any regard to local divisions, was sealed up against this infamous traffic. We have seen also that authority was given to Congress for governing the territories, and also in what manner, and to what extent, the authority thus given had been exercised; that the extension of slavery into new territory was prohibited, and free institutions encouraged and established. During all this time, no one brought into question the authority of Congress in these proceedings; not a doubt was started. Neither was it then disputed that, in these measures, the power of Congress had been properly and wisely exercised. That slavery was an evil, and that its final extinction was a thing to be desired and sought, was then, at least in all the earlier years of this period, almost everywhere conceded. And the action of the General Government, imitated as it was in many of the States, gave strength to expectation and hope, and the patriot and philanthropist exulted in the thought that, at no remote period, our entire country might be devoted anew, consecrated, as it were, as a home for free principles and free men.

From the brief review that has been taken, would there not seem to be ground for the position assumed at the outset, that our national institutions were erected as free institutions, for the purpose of giving and securing liberty to every individual within their reach?

Fortunate for the country, and most fortunate for the cause of liberty and humanity, would it have been, had the course of policy just noticed been fully and steadily pursued. But this was not done. Even during a part of the period that has just been reviewed, influences began to arise which were calculated to produce a change in the feeling of the country, or rather, in one particular section of country. The discovery that the soil and climate of this section were eminently suited to the culture of articles which were soon to be ranked amongst the most important of staple productions, was a circumstance which had a decided bearing upon the course of action and of thought.

The bringing to light and putting into activity a means by which the wealth of the country might be greatly increased, might seem, in itself, to be a cause of general gratulation ; and such, indeed, it would have been had the means been so employed as to give it place within a liberal and comprehensive system of industry—a system which would enlist the productive energies of all within its reach, and spread its benefits to every class. But this was not the case. The benefit enured, in a great degree, to a single class, and that, numerically, a very small one. To the cultivation, which was at the basis of all this opulence, slave-labor could be readily applied, and was well adapted. The slave, however degraded, could be used for this purpose, and his physical qualities were suited to it. Hence, a higher relative value was given to the labor of the slave, and, of consequence, the grasp of the master was tightened. The interest of one class would thus be advanced, even in proportion as others were depressed ; and, as interest grew stronger and stronger, as a necessary effect in such a case, principle would become weaker and weaker. Various other circumstances might be mentioned which served at this time to dampen the generous spirit of liberty that had formerly prevailed. In the extension of the false systems which had come into place, men had been raised to social and political distinction who had more of the feeling of caste than of the feeling of country ; and from the high places they had gained, those men began to look down and to question whether the old cause had really been as comprehensive as they had been taught. They began to doubt whether Washington and Jefferson and Adams and Franklin had not sought too much—had not reached too far. These questioners could scarcely believe that the old battle had been waged as well for the dwellers in the cot, and the laborers in the field, as for those who were reposing in luxury in their halls. And such doubters would not be long in persuading themselves to think that the measures which the men who had gone before them had devised to promote and secure emancipation, and spread liberty throughout the whole of the land, were either useless or mischievous, and that existing relations should remain untouched. Joining in with this new current of feeling was an influence which sprang from another source. At this time a large extent of country had been acquired by the purchase of Louisiana. Important advantages had been secured by this acqui-

sition ; but, at the same time, elements had been brought in which did not harmonize well with the spirit of our national institutions. And the effect of all these changes was now to be manifested. In the year 1819, application was made for the admission of Missouri into the Union, with a constitution recognising slavery. In many respects, this was a new question. Missouri was a part of that extended territory which, as just mentioned, had been acquired by purchase. Under such circumstances, its relation to the General Government would be that of new territory ; it would fall entirely within the control of Congress, and be liable to the application of principles and rules which Congress had adopted and acted upon in similar cases. The situation of the country, indeed, was somewhat peculiar. Louisiana had long been settled. Under the rule of France and of Spain, government had been erected, and slavery had then been admitted and fully encouraged. Yet no existing regulations or usages could hinder the establishment of new institutions. The United States had acquired full sovereignty, and, of consequence, all former sovereignty and authority would at once become extinct.

One of the primary movements of government in this territory was the division of the country into two districts—the district of Orleans and the district of Louisiana. The former of these (Orleans) contained the greater portion of the population and most of the slaves. There, indeed, had been a kind of mart for the traffic in slaves. In organizing government within this district, a provision was made by Congress, entirely prohibiting the importation of slaves into the district in future, and directing that all slaves so brought in should be immediately set free ; but, in other respects, no alteration in regard to slavery was made. Orleans was afterwards erected into a State, and, under the name of Louisiana, was admitted into the Union in 1812. It was admitted as a Slave State—a concession to an existing evil which the peculiar circumstances of the case might palliate, but could not justify. Within the other portion of territory, the *old* district of Louisiana, organic laws were also established, and here, whilst no specific provision was made in regard to slavery, the country was placed, for the time, under the government of Indiana—a territory in which slavery had been prohibited. This same old district afterwards assumed another name—Missouri ; and it was this Missouri that was

now an applicant for admission into the Union. It has been said, that, in many respects, the question presented in this application was a new one. No state formed out of territory under the control of Congress had hitherto been admitted into the Union with a constitution permitting slavery, except Louisiana; and, in that instance, as has been seen, the obstructions to the free operation of government were deemed to be of such magnitude as to demand consideration. In the present case, the circumstances were not the same. The settlement of the country had occurred at a later period, and under circumstances far more favorable to freedom; the false and vicious usages which had been introduced by other nations had not here become so firmly fixed. A proper relationship with the General Government might be more easily established. And now, too, it had become necessary to determine whether the settled principles and settled policy of the government were to be sustained or abandoned—whether freedom was to stand and triumph, or slavery be permitted to advance. That was the true question, and a more important one has rarely been presented for the decision of men. The application now made was in direct opposition to the spirit of the government and to the general tenor of its previous course. It was in opposition also to every principle of liberty and humanity. But it still had powerful support. It was found that the feelings and interests which had grown up in the South had acquired such sway that the entire force of that section was arrayed in behalf of the measure. It was even urged, though now urged for the first time, that the admission could not be rightfully refused—that Congress had no right to impose conditions upon States. At that time, and as presented in that manner, the application was rejected; but it was again brought forward, and a plan of proceeding was then adopted, that has so often been resorted to when the stern demands of justice and of right are to be evaded. It was a plan of compromise. Without insisting upon the question as to the actual power of the government to refuse admission to States, it was now proposed that such power should not be exercised in future within a certain portion of country, whilst it should be acknowledged and confirmed in the remaining portion. A long and irritating contest ensued. But at length the desire of peace and the hope of securing the country against contention and discord in

future, induced concession on the part of the North, and Missouri was admitted on the terms proposed. To the extent of this concession, the act must be regarded not only as a relinquishment of an important right by the North, but also as an abandonment of duty, and, as such, it can only be lamented and condemned. But still, if principle was not carried to its proper extent, (as surely it should have been,) it yet was by no means surrendered. On the contrary, the men of the North supposed that the fullest security was given against any violation of principle on this point in future. If slavery was admitted from one portion of the country in question, it was yet to be entirely and finally excluded from the portion that remained. Not only was it acknowledged that the government had, and should have, full power within the remaining portion, both to establish free institutions and to reject and prohibit all others, but, besides this, the parties in the present compact joined in a solemn act of prohibition for all future time. As a part of the act admitting Missouri, it was declared that in all that territory ceded by France to the United States under the name of Louisiana, which lies north of 36 deg. 30 min. of north latitude, not included in the State of Missouri, slavery and involuntary servitude, otherwise than in the punishment of crime, *shall be and is hereby forever prohibited.* Here, then, a final limit was fixed.

Such were the circumstances under which the next stage of the national career was entered upon. And during the earlier periods of this course, the measures were such as to give ground for the hope and belief that, notwithstanding all that had passed, the vigor of the government was not impaired; that it would maintain its tone; and that there would be no deviation or halt in future. The old ground was again taken. Territorial governments were established upon the old basis. In the year 1836 an enactment was made for the establishment of organic law in the Territory of Wisconsin—a territory that embraced what is now included in the States of Wisconsin and Iowa and the Territory of Minnesota. Over all this extent of country the provisions of the ordinance of 1787 were now extended and applied. In 1838, Congress again endorsed this ordinance in the passage of the organic law of Iowa. In 1848, again, the same action was taken in regard to the Territory of Oregon; and, in 1849, a

similar act was passed in the case of Minnesota. And this course of action was sustained by universal assent. But measures of a very different character were also brought forward. The slavery party (for, sad to say, such a party had taken an open position in the country,) became again active, and were even more bold in their demands. The concession they had obtained in the Missouri Compromise seemed only to increase the avidity for new acquisitions. Not content with the somewhat passive action of Congress in their favor in the admission of Missouri and of other States south of the specified line, an attempt was now made to urge on the government to more decisive and active proceedings. During the administration of John Tyler, a proposal was made for the admission of Texas into the Union, and the application was strongly supported by the president and his immediate friends. For the first time in the history of the country, the President of the United States was seen to come forward and openly advocate the principle that the means and the power of the government should be used for the purpose of sustaining and extending slavery. It was acknowledged by the administration that the paramount motive of the government in annexing Texas was two-fold. *First*, To prevent the abolition of slavery within its limits; and, *Second*, To render slavery more secure and more powerful within the slave-holding section of the Union. Texas had been under the rule of Mexico, and, at that time, slavery had been prohibited; and now, if Mexico should recover the country, liberty might be re-established. And the approach of a non-slave-holding empire towards our boundary was regarded as a thing to be earnestly guarded against. The neighborhood of freedom was not to be allowed. So perverting is the influence of error and vice—so subversive is it of all the true interests of men and the true policy of nations! Much might have been said, and perhaps truly said, in regard to the importance of the proposed acquisition, as adding to the extent and population of the country, and as giving security against unfriendly intervention from abroad; but, with all these advantages, and with a condition securing freedom within the territory, would Texas have been sought or accepted by that administration? This has never been said or pretended. On the contrary, we have the express declaration that the paramount object in view was the extension and perpetuation of slavery. It was an ignoble motive, and he

who could propose it as the basis of national action, deserves to be a marked man in all time to come. But the measure was sustained. Texas was admitted into the Union with a constitution permitting and sustaining slavery.

The slave power was now advancing in influence and strength, and the steps which quickly succeeded, carried it far onward towards full ascendancy in the country. The annexation of Texas involved us in a contest with Mexico—a contest which brought a great augmentation of territory, but brought also renewed agitation. In the altered condition of the country, new interests were to be adjusted, and the advocates of slavery again stood forward to seize hold of every advantage or compel to further concession. A settlement was finally reached by another resort to the compromise plan, and, as before, the result was but little favorable to freedom. If one Free State was admitted, large portions of territory were opened to slavery; and, still more, the General Government was converted into an instrument to be used for the pursuit and recovery of fugitives.

Such was the situation of affairs when the present administration came into power. There was then a pause. If the people of the country who were favorable to freedom were not satisfied, as, indeed, they could scarcely have been, they, at least, were disposed to acquiescence. And the new president declared that, by the late measures, the questions which had agitated the country had been finally settled. He declared, too, before the country and before the world, that so far as it lay with him, there should be no further agitation upon the subject of slavery. Men then took hope, and began to suppose that perhaps a better era was at hand. They reflected that if much had been lost, so also much was still held; an extended portion of country was yet reserved to freedom; the Missouri Compromise line remained untouched. Whilst, then, the entire area given or exposed to slavery had been greatly extended, there was still a wide domain secured against it; and this had been secured as a free domain by agreements and acts which had within them all those elements of strength which men are accustomed to regard as giving to their transactions validity and force. The compact had been deliberately made, the bond was sealed, the price paid down, and the faith of the parties was said to be pledged forever.

But what can stand against unholy ambition and the lust of power! Slavery had secured its gains and been constantly adding to them; it had extended its sway, established its outposts, and had gained a place and wielded a power within the government itself. It had become the gaining—the advancing party. In a word, it had come to be the party which was to be sought and conciliated by those who were seeking for place and for power. In such a case, the result may be easily foreseen. Aspirants would hasten to lay their offerings upon the new altar, and now there were men who were ready to place upon it much that remained of the liberty and honor of the country; and he who had been chosen for another and a very different service, was amongst the foremost to offer his aid in this act of sacrifice. The restriction contained in the Missouri Compromise was the great remaining barrier in the way of the progress of slavery. This, then, must be removed. Accordingly, in May, 1854, the Kansas and Nebraska act was passed, in which it was declared that the prohibition contained in the Missouri Compromise was inoperative and void. Thus, the great guard, the chief defence of freedom in that land, was at once broken down. By this perfidious act, as it may justly be termed, a feeling of deep indignation was speedily aroused, and this feeling has been heightened, rather than allayed, by the pleas which have been urged in its support. It is alleged, that because the North had not consented to extend the line of the Missouri Compromise into other countries, that the spirit of the compromise itself was violated, and its binding force destroyed. This argument, if argument it can be called, is founded entirely upon a false assumption. It is assumed that slavery had a right to enter and demand a share, and to hold a share in a sort of severalty. *There was no such right.* The whole power was in the General Government, and that government had been formed for freedom; and if, in a time of indecision, or under the pressure of certain special circumstances, something had been yielded to slavery, it had been done as a concession, and not on the ground of right. And could it be supposed that, in making one concession, an obligation was incurred to yield in the same way, and to the same extent, whenever a new demand should be made, and that, if the demand should be refused, all former engagements would be void? Yet this is the scope of the argument in question. In point of fact, however, though

without a rightful claim, slavery did receive a share, and that a large one, and hence the plea now under notice has no support either in the principles or the facts of the case. But another plea is also presented. In this it is urged that the Missouri Compromise restriction was unconstitutional ; that Congress had no rightful authority to impose such a prohibition ; that the whole question of slavery is a thing pertaining to local authority, and coming, in no degree, within the sphere of national action. This was a notable discovery. But it stands in direct opposition to the general course of affairs for a period of more than the half of a century. It stands in opposition to principles of action which were adopted by the government when Washington stood at its head ; which had the sanction of nearly all of his successors—the sanction of men whose names have given lustre to our history—names which will go down to future times connected with the renown of the republic. It is in opposition, also, to the whole series of the acts of Congress bearing upon this question from the year 1789 down to the year 1850, as well as in opposition to the Missouri Compromise act itself, which had the assent of the acutest men of the time amongst the supporters of slavery, and which was confirmed in a manner to give it the national sanction. And can it be, then, that all these proceedings had been wrong ; all these men in error ; and that darkness had been upon the whole path of the government until light was thrown upon it by the men of the present time ? No argument is needed to meet such a pretension. Argument would not be fitting. It is best left to its own immeasurable arrogance.

And the actual working of this new doctrine of local sovereignty gives a sad, but true, illustration of its character and tendency. When the people of Kansas attempted to exercise the powers with which they supposed they had been clothed, a plan of action was devised and executed by men from abroad to compel them to such a course of action as would ensure the triumph of slavery—a plan which was approved, and is now sustained, by those who wield the executive powers of the national government. And Kansas is prostrate. And herein is seen not only the evil, but also the inconsistency, of the doctrines and movements of the time. The same party which declares that the government is powerless,—that it possesses no authority for the purpose of securing freedom,—found no want of power for extending and

supporting slavery when Texas was annexed, and finds no want of power now when Kansas must be grasped.

The issue is made, and now, if ever, it must be met. Slavery is advancing, and taking higher and broader ground. No longer limited and restrained, it seeks to spread itself throughout the land, and there is reason to fear that if its progress shall not be arrested, the time is not far distant when it will force its way over every obstruction—when the slave-trade will be restored—all the horrors of the middle-passage be again witnessed, and ships laden with their cargoes of human woe, be seen entering into all our ports.

In what has been said we have the illustration and the proof of our position, that a policy has grown up in our government inconsistent with its original design; that power is now wielded in opposition to liberty and in favor of slavery.

What, then, is our duty? Doubtless we are called upon to act, and that with earnestness. But in what course of action? As mere partizans—as agitators—as disunionists? No, no. We are to act as men of the country. We desire no innovation—demand no surrender of rights; but we do desire, and do demand, that the institutions of the country shall be sustained and their spirit preserved; that the government shall be administered according to the original design, as an instrument of freedom, and as an instrument worthy of freemen. We desire that our national course may be true, and onward and upward; that no cry of the oppressed may mingle in the sound of its footstep; but that its march may ever be attended by the harmony of glad and grateful voices chanting the hymn of liberty.

